

## Polar Place

Martha Gentry

ONCE there were three White Bares who lived in a suburban cave. Father Bare worked hard in the market place, buying honey from the country and selling it in the city.

"He's a likeable Bare," his wife would say, "and tries hard. It will be too bad if he has to be a honey salesman all his life."

This made Father Bare work harder and harder, night and day, and gave Mother Bare more money so that she could take Baby Bare to the best pediatrician in town.

"You must nurture this little Bare and give him all the love and warmth he needs," said the pediatrician.

Mother Bare, however, confused the meaning of the pediatrician's words. She doted on Baby Bare instead of loving him, nursed him instead of nurturing him, and kept him so warm that her best friends began to call her Smother Bare.

Baby Bare never went to bed early nor ate his spinach—simply because he didn't want to. Mother Bare knew that if she forced him to do these things against his will he would feel insecure. Baby Bare did not like kindergarten because the teacher was mean to him and wouldn't let him draw pictures on the floor.

"He doesn't have to go to kindergarten," said Mother Bare. "I'll keep him home with me."

The honey business was getting better every day, and Father Bare hired other Bares to help him. It kept him busy figuring his income tax.

One day he said to Mother Bare, "I have a surprise for you. Baby Bare must start to school soon and you'll be able to use this."

Mother Bare looked out the window, and there on the street was a long, black carriage.

"Yes, indeed," she said. "Baby Bare must start to school soon."

The teachers at school had never heard of insecurity, because they picked on Baby Bare. He didn't care for school. He didn't care for Sunday School either—they had the same kind of teachers there. Pretty soon, Baby Bare didn't go to Sunday School any more, but, as everybody knows, all young Bares have to go to grade school. Mother Bare gave him all the protection she could from the wicked teachers—whenever she wasn't away in the black carriage.

Baby Bare grew and grew. He went to the barber shop every week, and one day he came home with a new kind of haircut. The barber had left the hair growing long, just in front of his ears, and he looked exactly like all the other Bares at Junior High.

Father Bare didn't have to work on his income tax every night, so Mother Bare wasn't too surprised when he came in one night and said what he always said, "What's for dinner?"

"I don't know what Cook's planning, Father Bare, but I'm upset

over what I heard at bridge club today."

It seemed that their suburban cave wasn't in the suburbs anymore and, of all things, there were some Black Bares buying caves in the neighborhood.

"What are you going to do about it, Father Bare?" asked his wife. Father Bare suddenly remembered some work he had to finish.

The next time he came home for dinner, Mother Bare brought up the subject again.

"Baby Bare will be going to high school next year, and I'm not going to have him mixing with those crude Black Bares. I drove out to Polar Place today and found the most adorable new cave."

"What's wrong with this cave?" asked Father Bare.

"Nothing at all," she answered, "except that it's old-fashioned. It's time Baby Bare had a decent place to bring his friends. This neighborhood just isn't what it used to be, what with its old two-storied caves—and the Black Bares."

They were settled in their new cave by the end of that summer, and Baby Bare enrolled at Polar Central. He hadn't yet learned to like school, and they were still hiring those ignorant teachers who hadn't heard that young Bares must be protected from things that frustrate them.

When he was old enough to get a driver's license, Baby Bare asked Father Bare to buy him a carriage.

"Every young Bare deserves a Thunderbird," he told Father Bare. "And, by the way, Father Bare, I need more allowance."

So he put away his childish toys and played with his Thunderbird and his allowance. Mother Bare didn't always know where he was, because they were often away in their carriages at the same time. Father Bare didn't know either. He was busy with his books.

One day, a strange Bare wearing a badge came to Mother Bare's cave.

"I'm looking for Baby Bare," he said.

"Oh, Baby Bare's at school," said Mother Bare.

"Oh, no, Baby Bare is not at school. Baby Bare hasn't been to school for three days."

Mother Bare tore at the man with her claws and growled at him and said, "You must be mistaken. Baby Bare told me he was going to school."

Everybody at the school was as unreasonable as the man with the badge, which prompted Mother Bare to sympathize. "I'll put you in a private school where a Bare of your station belongs."

Then, one morning, the teachers and pupils of Polar Central arrived at school to find that someone had been there before them.

"Somebody's been breaking our windows—and chopping our woodwork—and running our fire hose," they said, and then, all together, chorused their judgment, "the Black Bares!"

The man with the badge said, "No, it wasn't the Black Bares."



And he went straightaway to Polar Place and found Baby Bare sleeping in his bed.

Mother Bare swooned when she heard Baby Bare tell the man with the badge that indeed he was one of the Bares who tried to chop down Polar Central.

"It was all Ted's fault," said Baby Bare. "He had an axe and I didn't, but he said I could play with the fire hose."

"After all, Mother Bare," he said, a tear rolling down his cheek, "when I was a young Bare, I wanted an axe of my own more than anything and you wouldn't let me have it. I never had a fire hose either. Young Bares should always have what they want to make them feel secure."

## "I'm Comin', Pa"

Lucia Walton

**T**HICK boots stamped and scraped the cement outside the door. It swung open, slammed against the thick body of the old shepherd dog sleeping in front of it. She pulled herself up with a whine and lurched across the room. Ben dropped his arithmetic book and ran to the dog; burying his face in her fur, he began to croon sympathetically.

"That won't do no good," Ben's father muttered from the sill. "That dog can't hardly hear your fussin'."

"Oh, yes, she can, can't you, Frisk?" The boy's tone was half-defiant, half-pleading.

"I said she can't hear right! Can't see, either." The big man looked angrily down at the dog, then turned his jutting nose toward the kitchen and inhaled deeply. "Supper ready, Martha?" he called, the heavy odor of stew twitching his nostrils.

"Pretty soon, Frank."

Unzipping his leather jacket, he sank into a bulky chair.

"You can too see, Frisky. Just as good as I can, can't you?" Ben was singing into the dog's ear.

Frank scowled at the blond hair swirling out from the boy's pink cowlic. "Quit fussin' and go help your ma. And bring me some coffee."

Ben gave the dog a squeeze and ambled unhappily to the kitchen. Frisk's pointed nose followed him tentatively, then snuggled between her freckled paws.

"Hurry up, boy!"

"I'm comin', Pa."

The dog raised herself at the sound of Ben's voice and trotted to the doorway. Ben, hurrying from the kitchen, fell over her; coffee inched blackly over the gaily-flowered rug. Frank flung out a curse. Running in, Martha snatched off her apron and began to blot the steaming rug with it.

"All over my new rug—oh, Ben, can't you be careful?"